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NEWSBYTES

Defense bill becomes law

President Clinton signed the Department of Defense appropriations bill into law Oct. 25.

The \$268 billion defense spending bill is part of the most comprehensive package ever put together for members of the armed forces and includes a 4.8 percent across-the-board pay raise Jan. 1, a one-time pay table reform and repeal of the REDUX retirement plan.

CSAF survey extended

The deadline for taking the Air Force Chief of Staff Survey has been extended to Nov. 12.

Officials said Oct. 26 the need to collect as much data as possible was paramount to the survey's success. That said, the success of gathering information through the use of the World Wide Web and the CSAF Survey's web site has been unprecedented, according to one official.

"The turnout has been amazing," said Capt. Pete Berg, CSAF Survey team. "In the first five days, we had 50,000 people turn in a survey via the Web."

The World Wide Web-based portion of the survey is located at <http://csafsurvey.randolph.af.mil>

AFMC seeks CCM

The Air Force Personnel Center's Chiefs' Group is assisting Headquarters Air Force Materiel Command in its search for a command chief master sergeant for the Air Force Flight Test Center, Edwards Air Force Base, Calif. The reporting date is March 1, 2000.

For more information call Chief Master Sgt. Scott or Senior Airman Soulies, DSN 527-2804. (Courtesy of AFPC News Service)

READINESS

■ AF chief of staff cites concerns

WASHINGTON — Air Force men and women are performing "great work," but the Air Force chief of staff cautions that low funding, low retention and high operations tempo are taking their toll.

Along with the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, and other military service chiefs, Gen. Michael E. Ryan spoke before the Senate Armed Services Committee Oct. 26, on the military's readiness posture.



For more on General Ryan's testimony, see Page 4

General Ryan and his fellow service chiefs said the pay and compensation package signed into law Monday was a big step toward reversing the downward spiral in retention and recruiting. But more remains to be done in the readiness equation.

General Ryan said the Air Force continues to view its readiness levels with concern. "Several years of sustained high op-



Photo by Master Sgt. Val Gempis

Capt. Chris Sunseri from the 18th Security Forces Squadron guards a C-130 during Operation Stabilise.

erations tempo and reduced funding in real terms have contributed to the slow, steady decline in our readiness."

He pointed out that readiness was down an additional 5 percent since his last appearance before the committee earlier this year, "partly because of our recovery efforts with the force after the air war in the Balkans."

To help alleviate the high operations tempo, General Ryan said, "We've instituted the air

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DOD considers ban on ATM surcharges

By Staff Sgt. Cynthia Miller

Headquarters United States Air Force

WASHINGTON — Connecticut and Iowa have banned banks from placing a surcharge on Automatic Teller Machines. The city of Santa Monica, Calif., just imposed the ban, and San Francisco will hold a referendum vote on the issue next month.

Amidst growing opposition to ATM surcharges, the Department of Defense is weighing in with a proposal to ban them on military installations worldwide.

"Why should we take money out of the pockets of our troops, when we've required them to have their paychecks go to their banks via electronic funds transfer?" said Michael Weber, from the Air Force Financial Management Office.

"The banks and credit unions on base have been brought in to operate without competition from other outside financial institutions, so ATM surcharges aren't necessary."

Bankers claim the DOD proposal will hurt

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Letters to the editor

U.S. Air Force Online News publishes letters based on their appeal to an Air Force-wide audience each week. Send your letter to the U.S. Air Force Online News staff by completing the form at <http://www.af.mil/newspaper/>

Due to the number of letters, not all letters can be published. Letters may be edited for grammar and length. Only letters accompanied by a valid name and email address will be considered.

Anthrax—only time will tell

I've recently seen a host of Defense Department news releases about the DOD's inability to rule out pyridostigmine bromide tablets as part of the cause for the gulf war illness. I immediately made a connection between this incident and our current anthrax immunizations. I then saw a story from DOD quoting Defense Secretary Cohen saying there is no connection between the two and they cannot be compared. ... I have to ask myself, "Will I read a news release 10 years from now saying the anthrax vaccination can't be ruled out as the cause for some horrible illness?" ... As in the case of PB tablets, I believe only time will tell.

Staff Sgt. Marc Barnes
Dyess AFB, Texas

What more do you need?

... there seems to be almost an officer vs. enlisted issue when it comes to the pay table reform. There shouldn't be! I'm not the highest-ranking person in the Air Force nor am I the lowest. My point is I'll get paid more when I get promoted and when has that ever changed? The pay table reform for July 1, 2000, will set into place a better pay schedule for

those who strive to make things better. ... Money can be an issue if that's all you think about — I just want to move up in the ranks and enjoy my journey there. Service before self, integrity first and excellence in all we do — what more do you need?

Staff Sgt. Scott Sturkol
Grand Forks AFB, N.D.

In the dark on Y2K

I am not so sure that the last sentence in your article "All systems 'go' for Y2K" [Oct. 20], is the full truth. If the statement "As we draw down to the closing days of 1999, be assured that the Air Force is ready for the year 2000 and beyond," is true then why are we being told at my base that we will have people in the offices with computers on New Year's Eve in case of Y2K problems? Maybe the Air Force is not as prepared as we think. I live on base at an overseas location and the thing that worries me, that I have heard no one address, is the local Y2K problem. Since all of our utilities come from the host country, will I be left in the dark on Jan. 1, 2000? I'm concerned what affect Y2K will have on the base if the host country is not ready.

Michael Sharp
Yokota AB, Japan

Education: overcome the excuses

By Maj. Chet Teel
F.E. Warren AFB, Wyo.

Eleven years ago, my first commander said, "Start your education. You may not realize it, but you'll never have a better chance than right now. No matter how tough you think it is, overcome the excuses."

He was right. I was a master of excuses to avoid continuing my education. Do these sound familiar?

"I just got out of school. I need a break before I start again." Whether you're fresh out of high school, technical school or college, take advantage of your "learning" mindset. You won't find out until it's too late how difficult it is to get back into the swing of studying.

"My job is too busy. I'll start school another time." As we progress in rank, our responsibilities increase. Do you think you'll actually have more time later in your career? Of course not!

"I don't want to start now because I won't be able to finish before I move to my new assignment." So what if you don't finish? Get the core classes done and transfer the credits. You'll have fewer classes remaining at your next duty station.

"I'll start next year when the class I want is offered again." Why not take other classes in the meantime?

"I'll have more time to study once I get promoted." I hear this excuse all the time. Certainly, studying for promotion is important, but you should be studying all year. Most people I talk to "cram" a couple of months — or a couple weeks — prior to testing. You

ENLISTED ACADEMIC EDUCATION

- 92% some semester hours toward a degree
- 14% associate's degree or equivalent hours
- 4% bachelor's degree
- 0.6% master's degree

Source: AFPC April '99

could be pursuing an education in the remaining months.

"I'll start right after the holidays." Which holiday? New Year's Day or Labor Day? All you're doing is kicking the can down the road. Start now!

"Once I finish my PME, I'll start school." If you're completing your professional military education in residence, you'll need to take off a couple of terms. If you're completing your PME by correspondence, can you honestly say it takes up so much time you can't take other classes? I used this excuse for a while, but inside I knew I had time.

"I can't afford to go to school." Money is a sensitive topic. After all, our finances affect every facet of our lives. But there are ways to overcome even this obstacle. Tuition assistance, scholarships, grants and loans are available. I'm still paying off my student loan, but I believe education ultimately increases your earning potential. So, before you dismiss higher education as too expensive, ask yourself, "Can I afford not to go to school?"

Last year, I was honored to commission a former noncommissioned officer who once worked for me. After the ceremony he said, "Thanks for encouraging me to overcome the excuses." All I did was help him make his first trip to the education office. From there, he and a counselor worked together to help him reach his goal.

If you haven't made that first trip to the education office, do it today. You may find the obstacles aren't as big as you think. Start your education now and overcome the excuses!



Air Force Academy Athletic audit report reveals discrepancies

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — A report by the Air Force Audit Agency revealed several discrepancies with the U.S. Air Force Academy Athletic Association's Fiscal Year 1998 Intercollegiate Athletic Program Revenues and Expenditures.

The final report cites discrepancies regarding internal controls, the use of nonappropriated funds and other financial management procedures, but notes the AFAAA did comply with applicable regulatory requirements. The audit, released Oct. 25, is required annually by the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Specifically, the report states that although account balances were materially accurate, the agency identified \$60,066 of adjustments to revenue and expenditure accounts that should be made, thereby raising the net loss to \$1,374,270.

Additionally, auditors noted:

- ◆ subsidiary ledgers were not established for three general ledger accounts;
- ◆ sales tax was not collected at the football stadium for retail sales, and
- ◆ reimbursements were not made to the appropriated fund for sports camp expenditures

Some of the internal control discrepancies included the failure of the AFAAA and other responsible officials:

- ◆ to properly record items received under partnership agreements and other items contributed to the athletic program;
- ◆ to establish internal controls needed to properly protect nonappropriated fund assets;
- ◆ to bar the use of funds for per-

Article available in its entirety online.

Academy housing audit results in policy change

WASHINGTON (AFPN) — A report by the Air Force Audit Agency has revealed the Air Force generally adhered to guidance concerning the use of operations and maintenance funds to make repairs to two general officer quarters at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

However, as a result of the audit, the Air Force has changed its policy concerning oversight of funding for repairs and upgrades of these facilities.

The results of the report verified that "the Academy generally followed Air Force guidance and past practices in funding public areas of the houses with O&M funds and funding private areas with military family housing funds.

The report stated, "the Air Force would be more consistent with congressional expectations if policies were changed so that all maintenance and repair actions exceeding the

\$25,000 annual limit, regardless of funding source, required Headquarters Air Force approval and subsequent congressional reporting."

The audit, initiated earlier this year, was requested by the Air Force secretary over concerns regarding maintenance and repair expenditures for Academy general officer quarters in Colorado Springs. It focused on maintenance and repair expenditures for the residences of the Academy superintendent, known as the Carlton House, and the commandant of cadets, the Otis House.

This included evaluating the need for past and planned work, the propriety of space designations, correctness of funds sources used to pay for past work, and the degree of oversight for maintenance and repair expenditures.

This article available in its entirety online.

Rescue Coordination Center AF unit assists with golfer's aircraft in distress

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (AFPN) — The Air Force Rescue Coordination Center here assisted in the search for a private civilian aircraft in distress that departed from Orlando, Fla., at about 9:30 a.m. Oct. 25.

The aircraft, a Gates Learjet 35A that had six people on board, including professional golfer Payne Stewart, was en route to Love Field in Dallas, Texas. It crashed at about 1:30 p.m. EST about 15 miles southwest of Aberdeen, S.D. There were no survivors.

Capt. Jimmie Evans, AFRCC shift supervisor, said the AFRCC received a call at about 10 a.m. from Jacksonville Air Route Traffic Control Center. Although the aircraft had been cleared to climb to 39,000 feet, it was heading toward 43,000 feet.

"The Jacksonville control center said they'd lost contact with the aircraft and wanted us to contact the Southeast Air Defense sector to have an aircraft intercept it



The Air Force Rescue Coordination Center assisted in the response to a civilian aircraft in distress, Oct. 25

and check its status," Captain Evans said. "The Atlanta air traffic control center was also tracking it and around 10:30 a.m., contact was made with the aircraft."

Captain Evans said an F-16C from the 46th Test Wing, Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., was the initial aircraft that intercepted the Learjet. Two F-16Cs from the 138th Fighter Wing, Okla-

homa Air National Guard, sighted the aircraft over Nebraska. Reports were that the aircraft seemed to be flying on autopilot at an altitude of about 40,000 feet. After trying unsuccessfully to make contact with the occupants, the fighters began following the aircraft.

"The 138th FW pilots made contact with (sighted) the aircraft over Lincoln, Neb., at an altitude of about 48,000 feet," Captain Evans said. "The aircraft was heading toward South Dakota, so we notified state officials of the situation."

This article is available in its entirety online.



AF implements fiscal 2000 involuntary NCO retraining

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFPC) - Some Air Force noncommissioned officers may find themselves involuntarily retraining next year, since the Air Force fell short of its retraining goal for fiscal 2000.

The voluntary phase of the fiscal 2000 NCO Retraining Program wrapped up Oct. 15 with 945 approved applications, 70 percent of the Air Force's goal.

The involuntary phase, which begins Nov. 1, will use an Air Force-wide vulner-

ability listing to identify those selected for retraining based on total active federal military service dates between:

- master sergeants: August 1982 or later
- staff sergeants/technical sergeants: August 1984 or later

- Second-term senior airmen: August 1993 or later.

Vulnerable members will be rank ordered by grade, from most eligible to least eligible using the following criteria:

- TAFMSD: junior to senior (i.e., Jan. 1, 1990 before Jan. 1, 1989)

- Date arrived station: longest to shortest (i.e., Jan. 1, 1989 before Jan. 1, 1990)

- Date of rank: junior to senior (i.e., Jan. 1, 1990 before Jan. 1, 1989)

Date arrived station, then DOR will be used only if the TAFMSD of two or more individuals is identical.

Individuals selected for involuntary retraining must submit a minimum of three, and up to five, Air Force Specialty Code preferences for which they qualify by Jan. 10.

This article available in its entirety online.



Tech. Sgt. Vito Ponzio uses his ATM card at Bolling Air Force Base, D.C.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Angela Stafford

DOD considers ban on ATM surcharges

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service members, not help them. Without the revenue generated by surcharges, banks would have less of a motive to offer ATM services. Opponents of the proposal also say they are concerned over their ability to continue to operate on military installations.

"Yes, removal of the surcharge could hurt service members, but only by convenience," Mr. Weber said. "The ban will only affect the number of machines located on an installation. While we may lose one or two per base, people will still have available ATMs in all of the high traffic areas on base."

This article available in its entirety online.

Chief of staff cites concerns

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expeditionary force concept, and I believe that in the long run, this should help our readiness and bring a measure of stability and predictability to the lives of our airmen."

He expressed the belief that the readiness decline will level off once the fiscal 1999 and 2000 budget initiatives and supplemental funding take effect.

"We already are seeing signs of improvement," he said, citing the fact that 42 percent of eligible pilots elected to extend their length of service, up to six years this year, vs. only about one-fourth last year. The Air Force considers 42 percent of eligible pilots accepting a bonus to extend their service commitment a leading indicator of pilot retention.

"And we hope it continues," he said.

Another key factor in the readiness equation, the general told the committee, is recruiting and retention of the enlisted force.

"In 1999, that was the first year we did not meet our recruiting goal," he said, "but we, in fact, recruited more airmen in 1999 than in 1998."

The general said the Air Force is increasing the number of recruiters and advertising budgets to address the recruiting shortfall.

He added that 1999 was also the second

year the service did not meet its re-enlistment goals.

"The highly technical nature of our force today and the 21st century requires we retain highly skilled individuals, particularly our NCOs," General Ryan explained.

He said that based on the reaction he's seen to the pay, bonuses, and quality of life improvements, he expects to see the recruiting and retention curves turn around.

"Unfortunately," General Ryan said, noting that the Air Force received only about half of a requested \$5 billion this year, "we still have unfunded requirements that contribute to our readiness shortfalls."

"We have to work on today's readiness; but, also, we have to work on tomorrow's readiness," he said; "not fight the last war, but fight the next war."

General Ryan pointed out that the force is deploying around the world with 20-year-old equipment. "Even if we execute every modernization program to date, much of the same equipment will be 30 years old in 2015," he said, indicating the time frame when much of the new equipment will be fielded.

"Readiness is a fragile issue," he said. "Once lost, it takes resources, time and constant attention to regain."



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